

Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin: A Common Vision for a Common Resource

Basin Plan Officially Adopted in September 2004



Elected and environmental leaders from Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and the federal government joined other interested watershed stakeholders along the Christina Riverfront in Wilmington, Delaware on September 13, 2004 to celebrate the completion of the Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin ("Basin Plan").

"Today's event marks an important milestone that was initiated by a 1999 challenge from the governors of our four basin states along with the federal government to lay out a policy direction for the use, protection, and enhancement of the basin's water resources through the year 2030," DRBC Executive Director Carol R. Collier said at the September 2004 ceremony. "We celebrate a visionary plan that reflects the investment of countless hours of discussion and creativity among many individuals from throughout the Delaware River Basin who responded to the 1999 challenge. However, much work lies ahead as we now strive to develop strategies and take action to realize the goals laid out in this plan over the next 30 years."

Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner was joined by Brigadier General Merdith W.B. Temple, Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor Catherine Baker Knoll, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell, and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Water Assistant Director Fred R. Nuffer in a ceremonial signing of a resolution supporting the implementation of the Basin Plan.

A number of federal agency representatives also participated by signing the resolution in affirmation of their agency's support of the Basin

Plan. These participants included Jane M. Kenny, Region II Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Donald S. Welsh, Region III Administrator, EPA; Joe DiBello, Northeast Regional Partnership Programs Manager, National Park Service; Catherine L. Hill, Northeast Regional Hydrologist, U.S. Geological Survey; Marvin E. Moriarty, Region V Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Anthony J. Kramer, N.J. State Conservationist and designated Regional Representative for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Basin Plan provides a goal-based framework that will serve as a guide for all stakeholders – government and non-governmental alike – whose actions affect water resources in the 13,539-square-mile Delaware River Basin that drains portions of the four states.

A Watershed Advisory Council, whose members represented a broad spectrum of basin interests ranging from business and industry to environmental advocacy groups, worked closely with DRBC staff, the commission's standing advisory committees, and ad hoc committees in the facilitated, consensus-building process used to forge the Basin Plan. Council members played an integral part in the development of the plan, devoting many hours in meetings and workshops, in addition to providing a forum for discussion, revision, and finalization.

Prior to the Basin Plan's completion, a series of six public meetings was held between January 20 and March 17, 2004 in Delaware (Dover), New Jersey (Millville and Bordentown), Pennsylvania (Bethlehem and Philadelphia), and New York (Narrowsburg) in order to solicit public comment on a draft

plan. Comments received throughout the public process were incorporated into the Basin Plan where appropriate, further emphasizing the plan's goal of being a collaborative effort.

Support for enhancing public participation and regional cooperation in the development of the Basin Plan was generously provided by a grant from the William Penn Foundation.

The goal-based plan to guide policy and action includes five desired results:

- An adequate and reliable supply of suitable quality water to sustain human and ecological needs through 2030;
- Managing the system of waterway corridors to reduce flood losses, improve recreational experiences, and protect, conserve, and restore riparian and aquatic ecosystems;
- Integrating water resource management considerations into land use planning and growth management while recognizing the social and economic needs of communities;
- Strengthening partnerships for the management of water resources among all levels of government, the private sector, and individuals sharing an interest in sustainable water resources management; and
- Providing opportunities to enhance appreciation and commitment to the protection, improvement, and restoration of the basin's water resources.

The plan is prefaced by a set of twelve guiding principles against which all policy decisions and actions affecting water resource management should be measured. It also suggests

Following the completion of the Basin Plan in September 2004, DRBC staff initiated efforts to organize the commission's six-year strategic water resources program and annual work plan to clearly align DRBC program priorities with the Basin Plan's goals and objectives. The water resources program covering fiscal years 2006 through 2012, which was adopted by the commissioners on September 26, 2005, reflects the transition in DRBC annual program reporting to include multiple-year planning to accomplish both the directives of the Delaware River Basin Compact and the Basin Plan's goals pertinent to the commission's mission. The annual work plan for each year, extracted from the six-year program, explains in greater detail planned activities and allotment of resources in the fiscal year necessary for those tasks.

a set of goals and objectives with milestones and indicators to measure progress towards achieving the plan's desired results.

The Basin Plan emphasizes integration and collaboration, and is not prescriptive or regulatory.

Also on hand to join the celebration was Benjamin H. Grumbles, Acting Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Water, who offered remarks about the two-and-a-half day conference, "Watershed Summit on the Delaware: Making the Connection," which followed the ceremonial signing event. The September 13-15 conference, also held in Wilmington, covered a wide range of environmental

issues in the Delaware River Basin by encouraging communication, outreach, and partnerships. One panel session discussed the Basin Plan and how it provides a framework for water resources management. The summit was sponsored by the EPA and DRBC, with the support and assistance of a number of additional agencies and organizations.

The Basin Plan is available for viewing on the DRBC web site at <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/basinplan.htm>. Copies also can be requested by contacting the DRBC at (609) 883-9500.